

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 STATE 067192
ORIGIN AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 NSCE-00 SIG-03 CIAE-00
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DRAFTED BY AF/W:PRCHAVEAS:HMN
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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY LAGOS IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN
AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
AMEMBASSY GABORONE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 067192

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS:PPDC, PRGOV, NI

SUBJECT: OBASANJO LETTER TO PRESIDENT CARTER

1. NIGERIAN EMBASSY DELIVERED FOLLOWING LETTER DATED MARCH
6 FROM OBASANJO TO PRESIDENT CARTER TO AF/W ON MARCH 13.
QUOTE: DEAR PRESIDENT CARTER, YOU WILL NO DOUBT HAVE
RECEIVED FROM YOUR SECRETARY OF STATE, MR. CYRUS VANCE,
A REPORT ON HIS MEETING LATE LAST MONTH WITH LIEUTENANT-
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 STATE 067192

GENERAL DANJUMA, CHIEF OF ARMY STAFF OF THE FEDERAL
REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA, TO WHOM HE EXPRESSED THE ASSURANCE
THAT THE ANGLO-AMERICAN PROPOSALS FOR A PEACEFUL SETTLE-
MENT IN RHODESIA, AS WELL AS YOUR JOINT INTENTIONS TO
IMPLEMENT THEM, REMAINED VALID.

THIS ASSURANCE APPLIED, PRESUMABLY TO ALL ASPECTS OF

THE PROPOSALS AS THEY MAY BE NEGOTIATED WITH THE PARTIES CONCERNED, AND WE WERE THEREFORE GREATLY ENCOURAGED TO HEAR THAT YOU STOOD FIRMLY BY THEM.

UNFORTUNATELY, HOWEVER, MR. PRESIDENT, I FEEL CONSTRAINED TO WRITE AT THIS STAGE TO EXPRESS OUR DEEP CONCERN AND ANXIETY THAT, SUBSEQUENT TO THESE ASSURANCES, THE MINORITY REGIME IN RHODESIA HAS ANNOUNCED TO THE WORLD A CONCLUSION OF THEIR SO-CALLED "INTERNAL SETTLEMENT" WITH BISHOP

MUZOREWA, MR.SITHOLE AND MR. CHIRAU, AND THE IMPRESSION HAS GAINED GROUND HERE IN NIGERIA, AS WELL AS AMONG THE PRESIDENTS OF THE FRONTLINE STATES WHO ARE NEARER TO RHODESIA, THAT BRITAIN AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, WHO HAVE JOINTLY SPONSORED THE ANGLO-AMERICAN PROPOSALS, APPEAR NOW TO HAVE SYMPATHY FOR THE SO-CALLED "INTERNAL SETTLEMENT".

I NEED HARDLY SAY THAT THIS IS, OF COURSE, A MOST DISTURBING IMPRESSION INDEED, PARTICULARLY TO THOSE OF US WHO HAVE STAKED OUR PRESTIGE ON PERSUADING AFRICA AND THE PATRIOTIC FRONT LEADERS TO GIVE THE ANGLO-AMERICAN PROPOSALS A CHANCE AND USE THE PROPOSALS AS BASIS FOR NEGOTIATION ON ACCOUNT OF SOME SIGNIFICANT POSITIVE ELEMENTS WHICH THEY CONTAINED.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 STATE 067192

FURTHERMORE, MR. PRESIDENT, I BELIEVE THAT WE OWE IT AS A MORAL DUTY TO POINT OUT, BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE, THE POTENTIALLY DISASTROUS CONSEQUENCES THAT ARE BOUND TO FOLLOW IF THIS IMPRESSION OF THE TACIT SUPPORT OF BRITAIN AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA FOR THE SO-CALLED "INTERNAL SETTLEMENT" WERE TO BE ALLOWED TO PERSIST, AND IF THE ARRANGEMENTS JUST CONCLUDED AND SIGNED WITH IAN SMITH WERE TO BE IMPLEMENTED.

FIRST, A CIVIL WAR SITUATION WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY HAVE BEEN CREATED, AS I DO NOT SEE THE REMOTEST POSSIBILITY OF PERSUADING THE PATRIOTIC FRONT LEADERS, WHO ARE NOW TOTALLY EXCLUDED FROM THE ARRANGEMENTS, TO LAY DOWN THEIR ARMS AND WATCH UNCONCERNED WHILE A REACTIONARY REGIME IS SET UP TO NEGATE ALL THAT THEY HAVE FOUGHT FOR AT SUCH COLOSSAL COST IN SWEAT AND BLOOD THESE PAST MANY YEARS.

SECONDLY, YOUR EXCELLENCY, YOU ARE OF COURSE ALREADY FULLY AWARE OF AFRICA'S TOTAL SUPPORT FOR A JUST,FAIR, AND EQUITABLE SETTLEMENT OF THE RHODESIAN PROBLEM, AND THIS MEANS, IN PRACTICAL TERMS, THAT AFRICA AND ALL THOSE WHO

FEEL THE SAME WAY, WILL FEEL OBLIGED TO CONTINUE TO GIVE THEIR FULL SUPPORT FOR THE ARMED STRUGGLE IN SUCH AN EVENTUALITY, AND OUR WORST FEARS WILL THEN HAVE MATERIALISED.

AS I HAVE SAID ABOVE, MR. PRESIDENT, IT WAS NOT WITHOUT SOME RELUCTANCE THAT WE AGREED TO GIVE THE ANGLO-AMERICAN PROPOSALS FOR A SETTLEMENT IN RHODESIA A CHANCE, OR TO PERSUADE OUR FRIENDS IN AFRICA AND THE LEADERS OF THE PATRIOTIC FRONT TO DO THE SAME, AND WE BELIEVE, IT WOULD BE A GREAT PITY INDEED IF, AT THIS STAGE, THOSE PROPOSALS

WERE TO BE UNCEREMONIOUSLY CAST ASIDE IN FAVOUR OF SMITH'S SO-CALLED "INTERNAL SETTLEMENT." WE ARE CONVINCED
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 STATE 067192

THAT A LOT MAY BE GAINED BY MAKING SOME MORE PAINSTAKING EFFORTS TO IMPLEMENT WHATEVER ASPECTS OF THOSE PROPOSALS HAVE BEEN FOUND ACCEPTABLE TO ALL PARTIES, WHILE FURTHER STEPS ARE TAKEN TO NEGOTIATE AREAS OF FUNDAMENTAL DIVERGENCE.

IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, MR. PRESIDENT, IT SEEMS TO US IN NIGERIA THAT IMMINENT DIASTER MAY YET BE AVOIDED EVEN AT THIS LATE HOUR, BY RETURNING TO THE NEGOTIATING TABLE ON THE BASIS OF THE ANGLO-AMERICAN PROPOSALS FOR A SETTLEMENT IN RHODESIA AND THE AGREEMENT REACHED IN MALTA.

IN THE MEANTIME, AND AS A PURELY INTERIM MEASURE, WE ARE CO-ORDINATING ACTION WITH ALL INTERESTED PARTIES HERE IN AFRICA TO HEAD OFF A CIVIL WAR IN RHODESIA, BY REQUESTING A MEETING OF THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL, AT WHICH THESE IDEAS COULD BE FURTHER ELABORATED AND, ABOVE ALL, TO ENSURE THAT NO PRECIPITATE DECISIONS ARE TAKEN TO ACCORD OFFICIAL RECOGNITION TO THE SO-CALLED "INTERNAL SETTLEMENT." WE COUNT ON THE FULL SUPPORT OF THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT IN THESE EFFORTS.

PLEASE ACCEPT, MR. PRESIDENT, THE EXPRESSION OF OUR GREAT ESTEEM AND HIGHEST CONSIDERATION. YOURS MOST SINCERELY,
LT. GENERAL OLUSEGUN OBASANJO. UNQUOTE.

2. WILL PROVIDE REPLY ASAP.

3. EMBASSY MAY WISH TO DISCUSS WITH MEA PROBLEMS POSED BY THIS METHOD OF TRANSMITTING CORRESPONDENCE FROM OBASANJO. YOU WILL RECALL THAT LAST NOVEMBER/DECEMBER LETTER DELIVERED THROUGH NIGERIAN EMBASSY WAS DELAYED
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 05 STATE 067192

THREE WEEKS (SEE 77 STATE 302457).

VANCE

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NNN

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To: LAGOS
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